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The Kūṭāgāra Suttas

The Discourses on the Pinnacled House • (a) A 3.105 & (b) A 3.106
or, (a) **Kūṭāgāra Sutta 1** or **Paṭhama Kūṭāgāra Sutta** or **Arakkhita Sutta**
or, (b) **Kūṭāgāra Sutta 2** or **Dutiya Kūṭāgāra Sutta** or **Vyāpanna Sutta**

Theme: The mind affects all our actions

Translated by Piya Tan ©2015

1 Introduction

1.1 THE SUTTAS' THEME.

1.1.1 There are **two Kūṭāgāra Suttas**: the Arakkhita Sutta (A 3.105) [SD 48.8a] and the Vyāpanna Sutta (A 3.106) [SD 48.8b]. They are so called because they share the same parable of the pinnacled house (*kūṭāgāra*). Both **the Arakkhita Sutta** (A 3.105) or Kūṭāgāra Sutta 1 and **the Vyāpanna Sutta** (A 3.106) or Kūṭāgāra Sutta 2, deal with the idea that “the mind is the decisive factor in all our actions.”

1.1.2 They both might as well be an expansion or reflection of the famous twin verses that opens the Dhammapada:

The mind (*mano*) precedes all mental states;
the mind is supreme; mind-made are they:
if, with a defiled mind (*paduṭṭhena*), one speaks or acts,
suffering follows one like a wheel that dogs a draught ox's foot. (Dh 1)

The mind (*mano*) precedes all mental states;
the mind is supreme; mind-made are they:
if, with a pure (*pasannena*) mind, one speaks or acts,
happiness follows one like a shadow that leaves not. (Dh 2)

1.2 THE SUTTAS' OCCASION

Both the suttas are addressed to Anātha,piṇḍika, but they are treated as if given on two different occasions—which might well be the case. However, it is also possible that the two suttas record *separately* what originally constituted a single discourse or a consecutive pair of teachings, but which are treated as two separate suttas.

Either way, each of the two suttas give a coherent teaching, each opening with a thesis. In **A 3.105**, the thesis is “When the mind, householder, is unguarded (*arakkhita*),” and in **A 3.106**, it is “When the mind is defiled (*vyapanna*).”

Each of the suttas has a parable [1.3], and deals with a happy death. Hence, it is possible that these teachings are given to Anātha,piṇḍika late in his life, or on the occasion of the death of his near or dear one. The first sutta is the longer one, with 19 paragraphs, treating its subject in greater detail, while the latter is shorter with only 11 paragraphs.

1.3 THE PARABLE

1.3.1 Both the Suttas use the same parable. In **A 3.105**, the ill-thatched pinnacled house refers to an unguarded mind [§§6-7] and the well-thatched pinnacled house refers to a guarded mind [§§4-5]. In **A**

3.106, the same first parable refers to a defiled mind [§§4-5], and the same second parable refers to an undefiled mind [§§9-10].

1.3.2 Related parables

1.3.2.1 The parables on the ill-thatched and the well-thatched are well known in the suttas. The best known, perhaps the most beautiful, with its rustic charm, are surely the rain imagery of **the Dhaniya Sutta** (Sn 1.2). The ancient poem has 8 pairs of contrapuntal stanzas, the first spoken by Dhaniya the cowherd, and the second a rejoinder by the Buddha.

The sutta opens with these two memorable stanzas:

<i>Pakkôdhano duddha, khīro'ham asmi (iti dhaniyo gopo)</i>	Boiled is my rice, done is the milking, (said Dhaniya the cowherd,)
<i>anutīre mahiyā samāna, vāso channā kuṭi āhito gini—</i>	With my family, I stay on Mahī's bank. My hut is thatched, my fire's well a-blazing—
<i>atha ce patthayasi, pavassa devo</i>	Fall, rain, fall, if you must! (Sn 18)
<i>Akkodhano vigata, khīlo'ham asmi (iti bhagavā)</i>	Anger-free, barrenness gone, am I! (said the Blessed One,)
<i>anutīre mahiy'eka, ratta, vāso vivaṭā kuṭi nibbuto gini—</i>	On Mahī's bank I dwell but a night, Uncovered is my hut, my fire quenched—
<i>atha ce patthayasi, pavassa devo</i>	Fall, rain, fall, if you must! (Sn 19)

Note here, however, that it is Dhaniya who boasts of a “thatched or covered roof,” that is, he enjoys worldly comfort and wealth. The Buddha, on the other hand, sings of the open air (probably living under a shady tree), and is just passing through, as it were, for Dhaniya's benefit.

1.3.2.2 We see the roof parable of the Kūṭāgāra Suttas used here in reverse, thematically. Both Dhaniya (in his well thatched house) and the Buddha (unroofed, in the open) have no fear of the falling rain, as they are both safe: Dhaniya in a *worldly* sense, but the Buddha in a *spiritual* sense. In the end, Dhaniya sees the Buddha and benefits from his teaching. All the 17 verses, except the last, close with this refrain:

Atha ce patthayasi, pavassa devo Fall, rain, fall, if you must!

— — —

8a

Arakkhita Sutta

The Discourse on the Unguarded | **A 3.105** [A:Be 3.109]
or, **Kūṭāgāra Sutta 1** The First Discourse on the Pinnacled House

Theme: The mind affects all our actions

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2010, 2014

1 Introduction

1.1 The first sutta is the longer of the two, with 19 paragraphs. In the first section, the Buddha speaks of **the unguarded mind**, how it similarly affects the 3 doors of action (body, speech and mind) [§§2-3]. Actions of the 3 doors that are *unguarded* are also defiled (*avassuta*) [§4]. Defiled actions are also rotten

(*pūtika*) actions [§§5-6], that is, they generate bad karma. Such rotten actions bring us an unhappy death [§§7-8], resulting in rebirth in the subhuman planes of suffering. [1.3]

The Sutta then turns to the parable of the ill-thatched pinnacled house. An ill-thatched pinnacled house will leave its pinnacle, rafters and walls unprotected, too [§9], so that they are also drenched when it rains [§10]. The teaching on the unguarded mind is the refrain [§§11-17].

The Sutta closes with the teaching on **the guarded mind**, which keeps the body, speech and mind guarded, too [§18]. When the 3 doors of action are guarded [§19], they are undefiled [§20], that is, untouched by the 3 unwholesome roots of greed, hate and delusion. When the 3 doors are undefiled [§21], they are not rotten [§22], that is, do not bring about bad karma. Such a person [§23] enjoys a happy rebirth [§24], that is, attains at least streamwinning at death. [1.3]

1.2 The term *arakkhita*, “unguarded” is well known, referring to mastery of the sense-faculties through restraint.¹ It appears negatively both in a literal sense [§§9] and in a figurative sense [§§2, 3, 18, 19]. Its positive opposite, *rakkhita*, appears both figuratively [§§18, 19, 27] and literally, as “protected” [§§25].

1.3 A key word *avassuta*, “defiled” (adj) [§§10, 13, 14], is the past participle of *ava* (“down”) + *vsru*, to flow, meaning,

- (1) (literal) “leaking, letting in water” (J 4:20,22*);
- (2) “letting out (humidity), oozing” (Tha 279);
- (3) (said to ruttish elephants) “under the influence of sexual excitement” (V 4:213,34, 214,14).² Its positive opposite, *navassuta*, “undefiled,” also occurs in the Sutta [§§20, 21, 29, 30].
- (4) “**drenched, moist, wet**” (A 1:261,32) figurative sense [§§10, 13, 14], where Commentary glosses it as “wet” (*tinta*, AA 2:368). It is used metaphorically to mean “defiled, corrupt”³ [§§13, 14]. Its positive opposite follows, *navassuta*, “undefiled” [§§20, 21, 29, 30].

In its metaphorical sense, *avassuta* is used especially as a complement to *pūti*, “rotten” (A 4:171,9). *Pūti*, “rotten,” is used negatively both in a figurative sense [§§5, 6] and a literal sense [§§15, 16, 22, 23]. And, positively, both in a figurative sense [§26] and a literal sense [§§30, 31].

1.4 The Aṅguttara Commentary explains that by “**unhappy death**” (*na bhaddaka kāla,kiriya*) [§8, 17] is rebirth in the states of loss (*apāya*) or suffering (*vinīpāta*), that is, the 4 subhuman planes of the violent and exploitative asuras, the ever dissatisfied pretas, the ignorant and fearful animals, and the painfully suffering hell-beings.⁴ These are states where it is almost impossible to think of good, much less generate good karma.

By “**happy death**” (*bhaddaka kāla,kiriya*) is meant rebirth as a streamwinner or one of the other three paths [§24, 32].⁵ (AA 2:368). A happy death brings us rebirth as a wholesome being in an environment conducive for spiritual practice and growth. Such a rebirth can also be in the heavens. If we are at

¹ See *Nimitta & anuvyañjana*, SD 19.14.

² See CPD, sv *ava-ssuta*.

³ S 4:184,25-186,11; A 1:261,24, 281,3*; Nc 85,9 f.

⁴ See (**Pañca**) **Gati S** (A 9.68), SD 2.20. “The 4 states of misery are hell, the animal womb, the ghost realm, the demon world” (*cattāro apāyā nāma niraya,tiracchāna,pettivisaya,asurakāyā*, KhA 189); cf Sn 377::SnA368. See also D 3:234, 264; M 1:73; A 4:459; Nc 550; cf S 5:474-77; Vism 552. For their location in Buddhist cosmology and other details, see SD 1.7 (Table 1.7).

⁵ See eg (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

least streamwinners, then when the karma supporting such a life is exhausted, we will be reborn as a wholesome human in an environment that conduces to spiritual growth.⁶

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Arakkhita Sutta

The Discourse on the Unguarded

or, **Kūṭāgāra,sālā Sutta** 1 The First Discourse on the Pinnacled House

A 3.105

1 Then the houselord Anātha,piṇḍika approached the Blessed One. Having gone up to the Blessed One, he saluted him, and sat down at one side.

The unguarded mind

2 As Anātha,piṇḍika sat thus at one side, the Blessed One said this to him:

“Houselord, when **the mind** is unguarded, *arakkhita*
 bodily action, too, is *unguarded*,
 verbal action, too, is *unguarded*,
 mental action, too, is *unguarded*.”

3 For one
 whose bodily action is *unguarded*,
 whose verbal action is *unguarded*,
 whose mental action is *unguarded*,

4 his bodily action is defiled,⁷ too, *avassuta*
 his verbal action is *defiled*, too,
 his mental action is defiled, too.

5 For one
 whose bodily action is *defiled*,
 whose verbal action is *defiled*,
 whose mental action is *defiled*,

6 his bodily action is rotten, too, *pūti*
 his verbal action is *rotten*, too,
 his mental action is *rotten*, too.

7 For one
 whose bodily action is *rotten*,
 whose verbal action is *rotten*,
 whose mental action is *rotten*,

8 there is **no happy death**, no happy end of time.⁸

⁶ The celestial beings, when their supportive karma is exhausted, would “fall” (*cuti*) into the subhuman planes incl the hells. See **(Nānā,karaṇa) Puggala S 1** (A 4.123/2:126-128), SD 23.8a.

⁷ “Defiled,” *avassuta*, see [1.2].

The parable of the ill-thatched pinnacled house

- 9 Houselord, just as when a pinnacled house is **ill-thatched**, *ducchanna*
its pinnacle (*kūṭa*) is unprotected, too,
its rafters (*gopāṇasi*) are *unprotected*, too,
its walls (*bhitti*) are unprotected, too,
- 10 the pinnacle is drenched [rotten], too, *tinta*
the rafters are *drenched*, too,
the walls are *drenched*, too—
- 11 even so, houselord, [262]
when **the mind**, houselord, is **unguarded**,
bodily action, too, is unguarded,
verbal action, too, is unguarded,
mental action, too, is unguarded.
- 12 For one
whose bodily action is unguarded,
whose verbal action is unguarded,
whose mental action is unguarded,
- 13 his bodily action is defiled, too,
his verbal action is *defiled*, too,
his mental action is defiled, too.
- 14 For one
whose bodily action is *defiled*,
whose verbal action is *defiled*,
whose mental action is *defiled*,
- 15 his bodily action is rotten [drenched], too, *tinta*
his verbal action is rotten, too,
his mental action is rotten, too.
- 16 For one
whose bodily action is rotten,
whose verbal action is rotten,
whose mental action is rotten,
- 17 there is **no happy death**, no happy end of time.

The guarded mind

- 18 Houselord,
when **the mind**, houselord, is guarded, *rakkhita*
bodily action, too, is *guarded*,
verbal action, too, is *guarded*,
mental action, too, is *guarded*.

⁸ Na bhaddakaṃ maraṇaṃ hoti na bhaddikā kāla.kiriya. Comy says that the “unhappy death” means rebirth in the suffering states (*apāta*) (AA 2:369). Cf §14 on the happy death.

- 19 For one
 whose bodily action is *guarded*,
 whose verbal action is *guarded*,
 whose mental action is *guarded*,
- 20 his bodily action is *undefiled*, too, *anavassuta*
 his verbal action is *undefiled*, too,
 his mental action is *undefiled*, too.
- 21 For one
 whose bodily action is *undefiled*,
 whose verbal action is *undefiled*,
 whose mental action is *undefiled*,
- 22 his bodily action is *not* rotten, too, *apūtika*
 his verbal action is *not* rotten, too,
 his mental action is *not* rotten, too.
- 23 For one
 whose bodily action is *not* rotten,
 whose verbal action is *not* rotten,
 whose mental action is *not* rotten,
- 24 there is a **happy death**, a happy end of time.⁹

The parable of the well-thatched pinnacled house

- 25 Houselord, just as when a pinnacled house in **well thatched**, *succhanna*
 its pinnacle is *protected*, too,
 its rafters are *protected*, too,
 its walls are *protected*, too,
- 26 the pinnacle is *not* rotten, too,
 the rafters are *not* rotten, too,
 the walls are *not* rotten, too—
- 27 even so, houselord,
 when **the mind**, houselord, is *guarded*,
 bodily action, too, is *guarded*,
 verbal action, too, is *guarded*,
 mental action, too, is *guarded*.
- 28 For one
 whose bodily action is *guarded*,
 whose verbal action is *guarded*,
 whose mental action is *guarded*,
- 29 his bodily action is *undefiled*, too,
 his verbal action is *undefiled*, too,
 his mental action is *undefiled*, too.
- 30 For one
 whose bodily action is *undefiled*,

⁹ *Bhaddakaṃ maraṇaṃ hoti bhaddikā kāla.kiriya*. Comy says that the “happy birth” is the attaining of streamwinning or one of the other 3 paths at time of dying (AA 2:368). Cf §5 on the unhappy death.

whose verbal action is *undefiled*,
whose mental action is *undefiled*,

30 his bodily action is *not* rotten, too,
his verbal action is *not* rotten, too,
his mental action is *not* rotten, too.

31 For one
whose bodily action is *not* rotten,
whose verbal action is *not* rotten,
whose mental action is *not* rotten,

32 *there is a happy death, a happy end of time.*

— evaṃ —

8b

Vyāpanna Sutta

The Discourse on the Defiled | A 3.106 = A:Be 3.110
or, **Kūṭāgāra Sutta 2** The Second Discourse on the Pinnacled House
Theme: The mind affects all our actions
Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2010, 2014

1 Introduction

1.1 This second sutta is the shorter one, with only 11 paragraphs. This Sutta’s theme is the same as that of the preceding **Arakkhita Sutta** (A 3.105), that is, that the mind affects all our actions. In other words, how we think affects all our actions, bodily, verbal, and mental. It is a shorter version of A 3.105, with the same parables, but using a different pair of key words [1.2].

The gist of **Dh 1 and 2** is that “as we think, so we act,” in the sense that our intention (*cetanā*) defines the moral tone of our deeds. If our intention is unwholesome, that is, filled with greed, hate or delusion, then, our action is also unwholesome. If our intention is wholesome, that is, filled with charity, lovingkindness or wisdom, then our action is wholesome, too.

1.2 Key words

1.2.1 The key words of the Vyapanna Sutta are “defiled” (*vyapanna*) and “undefiled” (*avyapanna*). The word **vyapanna** (adj) is the past participle of *vyāpajjati*, which comes from *vi-*, denoting separation, disturbance + *āpajjati*, “to undergo, commit, fall into (figurative).” The word *vyapanna* means “spoilt, disagreeing, gone wrong, faulty; defiled, corrupt, perverted.”

1.2.2 In the suttas, it is apparently used only in connection with *citta*, that is, in **vyapanna, citta**, that is, a defiled mind, a malicious heart, a malevolent intention, a bad thought. Thus, as an adjective, it means “malevolent” (D 1:139, 3:82; A 1:262,23), “warped” (A:W 1:241; A 299,2). Its opposite is **avyāpanna**, “not deranged, free from disorder; free from malice (*vyāpāda*).”¹⁰

¹⁰ D 1:71,23 = M 3:3,29; D 3:82,15 = 83,1 ≈ A 1:271,35; A 1:262,34, 2:31.26*.

1.2.3 The verb, *vyāpajjati* means “to go wrong, to fail, disagree; to be troubled; also (as a transitive verb) “to do harm, to injure” (S 3:119, 4:184 = Nc 40 *byāpajjati*; A 3:101 *bhattam me vyāpajjeyya*, “(it) disagrees with me, makes me ill”; Sn 1065 *ākāso avyāpajjamāno*, “not troubled, not getting upset”; Nc 74 (*byāpajjamāna*).

1.2.4 A related word is *avyāpajja* (also *avyāpajjha*, or *abyāpajjha*), meaning “harmless” (M 1:90,1). The adjective is also spelt as *byāpanna* (S:Ee 2:168) or *viyāpanna* (Sn:Ee 314).

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Vyāpanna Sutta

The Discourse on the Defiled

or, *Dutiya Kūṭāgāra, sālā Sutta* The Second Discourse on the Pinnacled House

A 3.106

1 Then, Anātha, piṇḍika the houselord approached the Blessed One. Having gone up to the Blessed One, he saluted him, and then sat down at one side.

As Anātha, piṇḍika was sitting at one side, the Blessed One said this to him:

The defiled mind

2 “Houselord, when **the mind** is defiled,

bodily action is defiled, too;

verbal action is defiled, too;

mental action is defiled, too.¹¹

3 For one whose *bodily action* is defiled,

whose *verbal action* is defiled,

whose *mental action* is defiled,

4 there is **no happy death**, no happy end of time.¹²

The parable of the ill-thatched pinnacled house

5 Suppose, houselord,

when a **pinnacled house**¹³ is ill-thatched,

its pinnacle is *defiled*, too;

its rafters are *defiled*, too;

its walls are *defiled*, too.¹⁴

¹¹ *Citte gaha, pati vyāpanne kāya, kammam pi vyāpannaṃ hoti, vacī, kammam pi vyāpannaṃ hoti, mano, kammam pi vyāpannaṃ hoti.*

¹² *Tassa vyāpanna, kāya, kammantassa vyāpanna, vacī, kammantassa vyāpanna, mano, kammantassa na bhaddakaṃ maraṇaṃ hoti na bhaddikā kāla, kiriyā.* “Happy,” *bhadda*, here also means “auspicious, blessed.”

¹³ “A gabled house,” *kūṭāgāra*, from *kūṭa* (“gable, pinnacle”) + *āgāra* (“building, house”): see SD 45.2 (2).

¹⁴ *Seyyathā’pi gahapati kūṭāgāre ducchanne kūṭam pi vyāpannaṃ hoti, gopāna, siyo’pi vyāpannā honti, bhitti’pi vyāpannā hoti.*

- 6 Even so, houselord, when **the mind** is defiled,
bodily action is defiled, too;
verbal action is defiled, too;
mental action is defiled, too.
- 7 For one whose bodily action is defiled,
whose verbal action is defiled,
whose mental action is defiled,
- 8 there is no happy death, no happy end of time.

The undefiled mind

- 9 “Houselord, when **the mind** is undefiled,
bodily action is undefiled, too;
verbal action is undefiled, too;
mental action is undefiled, too.¹⁵
- 10 For one whose bodily action is undefiled,
whose verbal action is undefiled,
whose mental action is undefiled,
- 11 there is a **happy death**, happy end of time.¹⁶

The parable of the well-thatched pinnacled house

- 12 Suppose, houselord,
when a **pinnacled house**¹⁷ is well-thatched,
its pinnacle is undefiled, too; [263]
its rafters are undefiled, too;
its walls are undefiled, too.¹⁸
- 13 Even so, houselord, when **the mind** is undefiled,
bodily action is undefiled, too;
verbal action is undefiled, too;
mental action is undefiled, too.
- 14 For one whose bodily action is undefiled,
whose verbal action is undefiled,
whose mental action is undefiled,
- 15 there is a **happy death**, a happy end of time.

— evaṃ —

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¹⁵ Citte gaha, pati vyāpanne kāya, kammam pi vyāpannaṃ hoti, vacī, kammam pi vyāpannaṃ hoti, mano, kammam pi vyāpannaṃ hoti.

¹⁶ Tassa vyāpanna, kāya, kammantassa vyāpanna, vacī, kammantassa vyāpanna, mano, kammantassa na bhaddakaṃ maraṇaṃ hoti na bhaddikā kāla, kiriyā.

¹⁷ “A gabled house,” kūṭāgāra, from kūṭa (“gable, pinnacle”) + āgāra (“building, house”): see SD 45.2 (2).

¹⁸ Seyyathā’pi gahapati kūṭāgāre ducchanne kūṭam pi vyāpannaṃ hoti, gopāna, siyo’pi vyāpannā honti, bhitti’pi vyāpannā hoti.